**Operationalization of Environmental Health Impact Assessment (EHIA) Guidelines through the Formation of a National Streering Committee (NSC)**

Devkota B, Shrestha S

Date: 2005

**Background**Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC), a leading health research agency, has come up with the development of the environmental health since 1999 as one of its operational strategies to encompass major health problems of the country. Over the last decade, in the process of implementation of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of Nepal, the consequences of projects on human health have been inadequately addressed and integrated into the Environmental Impact Assessment process. Most of the development works are human centered and therefore human health should be given high priority. With due consideration of this fact, Nepal Health Research Council has prepared a National Environmental Health Impact Assessment (EHIA) Guidelines as a sectoral guideline for the health sector to fill up this gap and institutionalize the integration of Environmental Health Impact Assessment into the existing Environmental Impact Assessment process.

**Methods**

National consultants conducted series of meetings with dignitaries of the state Minister of Health, Health Secretary, Focal point (Environmental Health), Joint Secretary of other concerned ministries and Member Secretary of Nepal Health Research Council. The National Consultants prepared The Terms of Reference (TOR) for National Steering Committee and for conducting its meetings. Then Ministry of Health and Population upon request of Nepal Health Research Council corresponded with these ministries and agencies to nominate their representative for National Steering Committee. National Consultants prepared the drafts of all correspondence and carried out follow up of the correspondences as and when required.

**Results**

The first outcome of the activity was the formation of a high level H-member National Steering Committee of Environmental Health Impact Assessment represented by Joint Secretary level officials and senior experts from different ministries and other agencies under the chairmanship of Health and Population Secretary. Secondly all members and experts were highlighted on Environmental Health Impact Assessment guidelines and its significance in existing Environmental Impact Assessment process in Nepal. The National Steering Committee also emphasized on the importance of representation of public health experts from Ministry of Health and Population in review committee board of Environmental Impact Assessment at Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology. Finally the Environmental Health Impact Assessment guideline was endorsed by the second National Steering Committee held under the chairmanship of Secretary at Ministry of Health and Population.

**Conclusions**

The continuation of National Steering Committee to review the Environmental Health Impact Assessment guidelines is felt very essential. At the same time the leading role of effective enforcement of Ministry of Health and Population in the amendment and application of Environmental Health Impact Assessment guidelines is thus recommendable.

**Keywords:** environmental health impact assessment; environmental impact assessment; guidelines; national steering committee.